Wading Through Cocytus

WHAT TO DO WHEN THERE ARE NO MORE NOBLOGS

[evil wizard distro]

[warzone distro]

So as of today, the United States government has designated Autistici, the Italian collective known for providing many anarchists with encrypted communications and web hosting, as a “Specially Designated Global Terrorist.” It was labeled as a supporter of “transnational far-left terrorism and violence” and has become the target of sanctions by the government. In a memo posted to the US State Department website, the spokesman Tommy Pickett had this to say in regards to its usage:

“*As a result of today’s action, all property and interests in property of the designated entity that are subject to U.S. jurisdiction are blocked, and all U.S. persons are generally prohibited from engaging in any transactions with them. Financial institutions and other persons may risk exposure to sanctions for engaging in certain transactions or activities involving the designated entities, with prohibitions to include the making of any contribution or provision of funds, goods, or services by, to, or for the benefit of the designated entities. Engaging in certain transactions involving the designated entities may also risk the imposition of secondary sanctions on participating foreign financial institutions. Violations of U.S. sanctions may result in the imposition of civil or criminal penalties on U.S. and foreign persons.*” – US State Department memo

The implications of this to anarchist activity within, at the very least, North America needs little explanation. Much of our communication, our mechanisms of contra-info, and sharing news have been relegated to the digital landscape. This, of course, may no longer be advantageous for anarchist scenes.

Yes, it did assist in propaganda efforts and in disseminating news across the world. We would even suggest that online communications spread our ideas to those who would otherwise be unaware. For a very long time, much of our ideas were relegated to urban areas and the occasional leakage out of the cities via travelers.

But we must ask, who was benefiting the most from this? Was it ourselves and our struggles, or the enemy?

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

We would like to expound a bit on how anarchists got to the point that we have, where our own cultures and scenes have become intermingled with the progressive forces of the digital age.

The emergence of the Internet represented something twain: a frontier of unfettered autonomy, of free expression and something that it would later become, an emerging tool served well by those systems administering the domination of every aspect of our lives. And why wouldn't it? A vast ocean of possibility, where information can be exchanged in the blink of an eye, provided quite the opportunity for power to establish itself infinitely.[1]

And like the rest of the world, our own communications entered into lockstep with the digital age. Indeed, this has been identified before and this is not a new phenomenon. In fact, it's a trend. The rise of information technologies represents a mirage of free communication, when in reality is coincided with expanding avenues for social control. The essay War Against The Information has this to say on the topic:

> "Control of information is the defining factor in the control of modern wars. As our lives take place in a social war for survival against the techno-system, information warfare and information control/distribution are two key factors in the new urban war which is taking place between the system and the people of the world it wants to conquer. The social clash is defined by access to information like any other resource or commodity."

1 Read *Technical Authority* by Jae Rodgers for a more in-depth exploration of this

FURTHER READING

War Against The Information Age by Anonymous

Technical Authority by Jae Rodgers

Technology and Class Struggle by Wolfi Landstreicher

Society of the Spectacle by Guy Debord

Where Do We Meet Face To Face? by Anonymous

cash-strapped reader. Projects like Tinderbox are often viewed as anarcho-hipsteresque but We think they're ahead of the game on this renaissance of offline comms.

- In the vein of magazines, it is important to note the existence of mail art and mail zines culture. Trade info, news, journals, letters, etc.

FINALE

We are strongest when we are creative, and we are most resilient in the face of repression when we are excellent problem-solvers. Let's not forget this, and let's certainly not view the current threat as the end of us. We're certain of this: that we will triumph. We are skeptical of any false promises for a better tomorrow, but today anarchists can be victorious. But our victory can only happen if we get off our asses and look towards the past to discover how we can continue to exist in the future.

Lastly, we'd like to close off with a post on Warzone Distro's Instagram page. How ironic it is that such a compelling statement about this was posted to the digital panopticon that is a Meta platform, but nonetheless is quite relevant:

As far as the Feds cracking down on Noblogs and other radical online infrastructure:

Just remember back in 2008 when anarchists communicated through a secured network of hand-written notes hidden in select public places, anarchist street carnivals and Days of Rage events, FTP marches any time a cop looked at us the wrong way, anarchist bookfairs almost monthly in any given city. The Feds cracking down on internet activity means sending us all back underground where their tracking and surveillance is much more difficult.

It also means we will all be rediscovering connecting, conspiring and having fun face to face rather than through digital mediums.

Anarchists were never immune to the entrapment of the Information Age. Today, we face many of the same issues that the rest of the world does albeit with much more intensity. The atomization of life accelerated by the Internet has led us to alienate each other and ourselves.[2] We've become content with rebellion in social media comment sections bickering with alt-right trolls and tankie imbeciles.[3] And most relevant to this topic and perhaps the scariest result, we too have traded security for convenience and for us it leads to more immediate consequences.[4]

In many ways, anarchists have become far too comfortable with digital communications. The Internet, with its illusions of evasiveness and strength, is as sturdy as a wineglass on the hardwood floor and as quiet as the sound of its shattering.

"Would it, indeed, be in the interest of the ruling class to bring the exploited together in an even more concentrated manner? Could the mechanisms for creating social consensus and public opinion continue to function adequately for the maintenance of social peace in a situation of such unmitigated misery?" – Where Do We Meet Face To Face?

This is not to suggest that we must enter the shadows and leave ourselves to our own devices. This is not a call to wither away into irrelevancy and the slow death of state repression. We've seen this happen all too frequently, and at this point we must refuse to cave. We don't wish to tell you that this is an apocalyptic event, but rather that this opens up avenues of struggle that many of us forgot was even possible.

---

2 *The Smartphone Society* by Nicole Aschoff, *The Ghost Touch* by Warlock Lumpen, and *Running on Emptiness* by John Zerzan all provide exemplary explorations of this.

3 See *Always Against The Tanks* and *Fascism and The Spectacle Of Death*

4 Predating the repression of Autistici was something also rather recent, the controversy surrounding the live-streaming of insurrectionary action against ICE on platforms like Twitch and YouTube. Read the zine *Who Are You Streaming For? as* well as the zine *Caught In The Web Of Deception*

DESERTING THE CYBERSPACE

So in a world with no more noblogs, what do we have?

We have everything, we always have. We never lost options, we simply left them in the cupboard to collect dust.

We think there are some who may feel as though this will contribute to a culture of gatekeeping and exclusivity, but we must say does this not benefit us? The ongoing black scare[5] facing our milieus certainly suggest a level of not secrecy but increased obscurity and evasiveness is necessary.[6]

5 The idea of a "black scare" as of the time of publication is a topic of debate. Figures such as Margaret Killjoy have refuted the term black scare, and we certainly see why. Though we recognize that there are other groups targeted by this (Marxists, democratic socialists, Muslims, etc.) at the moment, we use the term "black scare" as it is rhetoric against anarchists in particular that defines this current wave of oppression.

6 See *Against The Cell; Illegalism after Prairieland / Against Legibility; How Movements Become Evidence* published by Distinctively Dionysian for more information regarding this

So let's blow away the dust bunnies and see what's at our disposal. We will present some options that we've pondered as individual suggestions accompanied by an explanation. This is not an exhaustive list as there is a multitude of possibilities to explore. We challenge you to explore the past, to explore possibilities to coming together and of information exchange that do not involve using the apparatus of the enemy:

- Anarchist convergences and bookfairs have been a staple of our scenes for many years, but they've become less numerous. Anarchists from around the continent and sometimes even the world congregating in one place to exchange ideas, share wisdom, and meet new friends/foes/accomplices. At times, they've even happened in the strangest of places. They can happen in your city or town too, all it takes is a little determination and maybe a friend or two.

- Have you forgotten the old art of tagging, of street art and of graffiti? These cultures are still bustling, albeit less radical. In many ways, as some of us who are immersed in the graffiti scene have observed this, we can get a laugh out of the nigh-high art pretensions of some writers. Some writers treat a tag like an intellectual property, which can be amusing. In any case, the world is your canvas. Humans have been writing on walls for thousands of years, perhaps you can show someone they aren't alone in their thoughts with your creation?[7]

- Take your ideas on the road! A sub-subculture of traveling anarchists sharing wisdom existed long before the days of punk and is historically an excellent way to transmit ideas.

- Anarchist magazines still exist, but in many ways print forms of existing zines have been relegated to a fringe culture of collecting. Why buy a print copy of Fifth Estate when you can just read the articles on the Internet? Print media is an avenue to explore, especially making it more accessible to the

7 Study the history of the French New Left and in particular the activities of the Situationist International (SI) if you're stumped. Your art certainly can be a blunt slogan a la Crass and the street art of the anarcho-punks, but it doesn't have to be!